

► WEAPON AND AMMUNITION

08 July 2025

Rheinmetall Squad Support Weapon SSW40 in live firing – first impressions of the firing support weapon

Rheinmetall unveiled its new Squad Support Weapon 40 in live firing for the first time. During a trade press event, representatives from various defence media had the opportunity to experience prototypes of the first automatic magazine-fed shoulder-fired grenade launcher for the new 40 mm x 46 medium velocity ammunition.

The SSW40 is designed to bolster the infantry with greater firepower by providing a versatile and at the same time, with a compact weapon. The soldier can handle and operate the weapon in similar fashion to an assault rifle with an operational firing range of up to 900 metres. The SSW40's airburst capability also makes it suitable for engaging on targets behind cover and for counterattacking drones.



Medium Velocity Ammunition

Medium Velocity (MV) ammunition is more powerful than the long-established 40 mm x 46 Low Velocity (LV) ammunition. As a result, MV ammunition has a higher velocity, a longer range and a longer trajectory. Targets can be engaged at ranges of up to 900 metres. Additionally, the MV ammunition can carry a higher payload, further increasing the versatility of the 40 mm ammunition range - including the option of programmable airburst ammunition. Another advantage is that the SSW40 can fire long ammunition types due to its break barrel capability. The MV ammunition bridges the gap to the 40 mm x 53 High Velocity ammunition range, which can only be fired from crew served automatic grenade launchers.

Easy handling

With an empty weight of around four kilograms, a length of approximately 80 centimetres and ambidextrous operation, the SSW40 is extremely ergonomic. Operating the weapon is quickly comprehensible. The main controls are the combined safety and magazine release switch (a customer request), which can be reached with the thumb or index finger of the shooting hand on both sides. The bolt catch on the top of the receiver, the break barrel switch lever in front of the magazine as well as the cocking mechanism in the shoulder stock can be easily operated with either hand. There is also a disassembly switch at the rear of the receiver for fieldstripping and disassembly of the weapon.

► Key facts

- World's first automatic, self-loading handgun in 40 mm MV calibre
- Ergonomics similar to an assault rifle
- Ammunition with a range of up to 900 metres, both armour-penetrating and with air burst capability
- Fires all 40 mm LV ammunition types currently in service as well as the new 40 mm MV ammunition family

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At the shooting range

At the Unterlüß test centre, steel plates were set up at distances of 100, 200, 300 and 500 metres for test firing. Also, a wrecked car set up as a target at 250 metres. Equipped with body armour, helmets, safety goggles and ear protection, the participants first fired a single shot from a 40 mm x 46 low-velocity grenade launcher in order to later be able to better compare it with the SSW40. This was followed by two rounds of four shots with the new weapon. Target Practice Marker-Tracer (TPM-T) ammunition was used in both calibres.

Most shooters aimed at the car. But the other targets - including those at 500 metres - also came under fire and were hit. The participants were impressed by the weapon. In terms of ergonomics, it resembled a heavy assault rifle. They also reported unanimously that, despite the higher pressure of the medium-velocity ammunition, there was no difference between the two types of ammunition when firing, thanks to the SSW40's encapsulated, self-regulating hydropneumatic recoil damping system. An Aimpoint red-dot sight was used for aiming, and the target was easily picked-up. For longer distances, it was at times necessary to slightly adjust the aim in order to hit the target. This was easily achievable for an experienced shooter. The trigger's well-defined clean break contributed to the weapon's accuracy.

The SSW40 should be fully qualified by the company in the fourth quarter, and the first customer verification is also expected to be completed by the end of the year.

